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INTRODUCTION.

WE are, at length, enabled to present to the public the first number of the **CHRISTIAN REVIEW**. If any apology were required for the delay, it would be sufficient to refer to the manifold obstacles which have obstructed the progress of our enterprise. The project is, indeed, a difficult one ; and it must be regarded as an experiment, though the indications of Providence are favorable, and the manifestations of public feeling are highly auspicious. We have resolved to proceed, with a cheering hope, that these omens will not deceive us. The Editor may be allowed to say, that having, by the urgent request of his brethren, assumed the labor and responsibility of conducting the work, he feels that he has a claim on their energetic and steadfast coöperation. While he will neglect no effort in his power to ensure the success of the **Review**, that success will mainly depend, under God, on the prompt and steady support of the denomination. The Editor must act as the conductor of the engine, but the impulsive power must chiefly be supplied by others. Much talent and toil must be expended in furnishing the materials of the work, and there must be zealous labor to extend its circulation. All our brethren must coöperate with us,—the literary man with his pen, the rich man with his money, the active with his zeal, and all with their prayers, to Him, who alone can give success to human plans, however wise, and to human efforts, though sincere and strenuous.

The plan of the work is briefly sketched in the Prospectus. It may now be proper to speak more fully of the general design of the Review, and of the beneficial results, which, as we hope, will ensue from its agency.

The great ultimate object, which the founders of this work propose for it, is, the advancement of the Saviour's empire on the earth. To this glorious consummation, all agencies, and all events, ought to be subordinate and tributary. The motives which are drawn from it, ought to affect all human conduct.—It should supply principles of action; it should modify the canons of criticism; it should control our opinions of men and things. It is the proper point of moral observation; and the rectitude and value of every thing should be tested by its adaptation to promote the magnificent issue, to which the Creator has destined the moral universe.

God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, has permitted the agency of many causes, and given scope to every kind and degree of influence. The action of minds on each other is the principal instrument. Next to the force of this action, as working by the lips of the living preacher, is the power of the press. The press, indeed, though inferior to the pulpit, in its immediate influence, has a far wider and more constant operation on the minds of men. Though it speaks with less authority, its voice is uttered more frequently, and in circumstances more favorable for attracting attention.

We propose, then, to enlist the power of the press, in this new form, in the service of the Redeemer. We shall aim to make our work correspond with its title. The doctrines which shall be taught, the opinions pronounced, the judgments uttered concerning men and books, the whole substance and spirit of the publication, we shall endeavor to render worthy of a Christian Review. Being devoted to the service of the Saviour, the work will, we trust, ever teach his truth, and manifest his spirit. It will aim to bring the graces of literature to adorn religion, and to be exalted and hallowed, in return, by being thus employed for the noblest of all purposes.

While, however, the Review will be dedicated to the common cause of Christianity, it will advocate those doctrines, rites and views of ecclesiastical polity, which are held by the Baptist denomination. We are aware, that the question may be asked, why we thus raise the ensign of a party, and not rather join the great company of evangelical Christians, rallied beneath the one banner of our glorious Leader. We may be told of the supreme importance of the spirit of religion, and of the unessential character of its forms. We may be reminded of the scandals which are occasioned by the feuds of warring sects. We may be exhorted to forget the insignificant differences which divide the respective communions, and to abstain from the discussion of disputed tenets, as an infraction of Christian charity, an offence against the spirit of the age, a discordant interruption of the great Christian concert.

We might reply, that, in our opinion, those who employ these conciliatory phrases unconsciously deceive themselves. Even if it were practicable to advocate Christianity, without maintaining any particular doctrines or forms, we might look round in vain, to find this company of Christians, who have merged all their different opinions in one league, for the defence of the common faith. We see every denomination adhering firmly to its own cherished doctrines and polity, and announcing itself as occupying that exact spot,—that Chinese centre,—to which all others should return from their wanderings, to find rest. An invitation to union generally means, that all other Christians ought to renounce their peculiarities, and return to the bosom of the one pure and orthodox church, as each denomination claims to be regarded. We know, indeed, that the Baptists are considered as peculiarly exclusive; and the exhortations to union are commonly meant for their special benefit. But we do not admit, that the Baptists are at all distinguished by a sectarian temper; though the fact, that in reference to the rite of baptism, the Christian world are divided into two parties only,—Baptists and Pædobaptists,—places this denomination in the attitude of opposition to all others, and draws upon it the concentrated resistance of those who unite

for no other purpose. The Baptists become conspicuous, because they stand alone ; and their voice is thought to be particularly pertinacious and annoying, because it utters the only sound of remonstrance against the perversion of a Christian ordinance. In point of fact, however, the Baptists are rather deficient in systematic efforts and well-digested measures for the advancement of their own interests. They have, as we believe, less of the proselyting spirit, than most other denominations ; and while some of their ministers, no doubt, insist too often on the subject of baptism, we venture to assert, that for every such sermon, there are two, at least, in which Baptists and their principles are assailed.*

But we assume broader ground. We believe, that God has made it the indispensable duty of every man to seek for truth, with a pure heart, and to obey it with an upright and fearless spirit. He is bound to connect himself with that body of Christians, if such a body can be found, whose doctrines and forms accord with what he believes to be the will of the Saviour. To labor for the prosperity of this denomination, then becomes identical with laboring for the welfare of the Saviour's kingdom. He cannot, as an honest man, fail to desire that this denomination may every where prevail ; for not to desire it, would be a confession, either that his principles are not sound, or that error is as valuable as truth. He may himself be misled, but while he honestly seeks for truth, he

* The venerable Dr. Miller, in his recent book on infant baptism, has allowed himself to say, with more severity than we expected from him : " Our Anti-pædobaptist brethren appear to be resolved, that it [the controversy about baptism] shall never cease to be agitated ; and as, indeed, the constant stirring of this controversy seems to furnish no small share of the very aliment on which they depend for subsistence as a denomination, they cannot be expected to let it rest." The good Doctor is not acquainted with the real state of things among the Baptists, though he cannot but know, that, while he represents them as maintaining their existence, in ' no small ' part, by the controversy about baptism, they outnumber his own denomination, by some two or three hundred thousand communicants. His book will probably receive due attention in one of our future numbers.

must uphold it, as he understands it. He must maintain the humble spirit of an inquirer, and must cherish a kind charity towards all other Christians; but there is no arrogance in acting on his own principles, and preferring his own denomination, as holding the truth more purely than others. Such a man is not to be charged with sectarianism. He only is a sectarian, who values his party more than truth; who aims to promote that party, though the Saviour's cause may suffer; who narrows his sympathies to those only who are leagued with him; and who prefers that good should not be done, unless he and his friends can have the praise.

We, therefore, respect the sincere adherents to all denominations of true Christians. We applaud their honorable efforts to promote their own interests. We see among them all much to approve; and we believe, that among them all, including our own, there is much which is wrong. We think, nevertheless, that the Baptists are more nearly conformed, in doctrines and rites, to the model of the primitive churches, than any other denomination; and we believe ourselves to be most directly laboring to establish the Saviour's kingdom, by promoting the advance of our own principles. We, also, in this manner, most effectively toil to produce true union among the followers of Christ. The edifice of union can be built on the basis of truth alone. No compromises, no half-way covenants, no sacrifices to expediency, can produce permanent concord. The union of Heaven is a perfect harmony of opinion and feeling. The union of Christians on earth is real and lasting, so far only as they hold one common faith, with one heart. It is because all real Christians hold in concert, as equally dear, much precious truth, that they enjoy so much union as subsists among them. Every truth which is won from controversy, and added to the common treasures of the household of faith, strengthens the bonds of fellowship. If all truth were cordially embraced by all, there would be a perfect union. We best promote that union, then, not by surrendering a disputed truth, or sacrificing it, as unessential, but by examining, and defending, and maintaining it, through evil and through good report,

till it shall please God to give to his people one heart to embrace and love it. Mere combination is not union. Bearing the same name, and rallying under the same banner, cannot unite men's hearts; and without real union there is not strength. Some of the denominations in our own country are divided into factions, which are more bitterly hostile than any two denominations can be towards each other. Indeed, in the moral as well as in the natural world, repellent bodies act with a force proportioned to their contiguity. We have no doubt, that there is more real union among the denominations, than there would be, if they were amalgamated in one, without any change in their present views. The existence of sects must, no doubt, be viewed as an evil; but, like other evils, it is overruled for good. It may be inseparable from the imperfection of the best men, and therefore useful, as a check to greater evils, which might attend a united, but stagnant and corrupting mass.

We have dwelt long on this point, because we hear much said in praise of union and liberality. Union can never be secured by the sacrifice of principle; and liberality cannot be manifested by sanctioning error. We can unite with all good men, in certain efforts for attaining valuable ends. We approve combinations of Christians for the furtherance of certain good designs pertaining to our common faith, or to the general welfare. Such associations require no compromises, while they accomplish great good by united efforts. But the denominations must be distinct, till they can, with one heart, embrace all the truth. Till then, they must act on their responsibility to God, and must cherish the spirit of mutual forbearance and love. They must all endeavor to become better Christians; and in proportion as they approach nearer to their Lord, will they draw nearer to each other.

Having thus explained our views concerning the propriety of giving to our Review a denominational character, we proceed to say, that we do not propose to employ many of its pages in directly teaching our principles. This will not be necessary, both because our readers generally will be Baptists, and because the controversy, on the main questions in debate,

may be considered as settled. The ablest advocates of infant baptism admit, that the Scriptures do not teach it, either by direct precept or by plain example; and no respectable scholar would now venture to deny, that the leading and most obvious meaning of the words employed in the New Testament to indicate baptism, is immersion. The ground of defence is now changed. The right of infants to baptism is argued from a certain mystical fitness of things, and certain lovely affections of human nature. The mode of baptism is now represented as a matter of indifference, if the spirit of the ordinance is preserved. It is virtually conceded, that the plain letter of the Word of God does not clearly sanction any thing as baptism but immersion, nor describe any persons as fit recipients of the rite, but believers in Christ. The Baptists, therefore, regard the controversy as really decided. They appeal to the Scriptures; and if they cannot be met on this sacred ground, they cannot consent to be drawn into the arena of debate, where tradition, and expediency, and inference, are substituted for the Oracles of God.

It is, nevertheless, the duty of the Baptists to defend their views against all misrepresentation and mistake. It becomes them to resist, in a proper spirit, the use of wrong principles of interpretation and of reasoning. God has called them to the responsible post of guardians of a Christian ordinance. Our Review will, therefore, be employed, occasionally, in explaining and vindicating the principles of the denomination; in repelling the assaults of those who may still glean up the old blunted shafts; and especially in resisting what seems to be the tendency of some influential minds, to place both the Christian ordinances on the Popish ground of expediency, and thus abandon the great Protestant doctrine, that the Bible,—the pure, unperverted Bible, honestly interpreted,—is the only and sufficient rule for Christians. We hope, however, to be enabled to fulfil this duty with a kind and courteous temper,—with that respect, which is due to the many able men, who are still in error on the subject in question, and with sincere Christian affection for the multitudes of excellent saints, who, though

misled on this point, love our Lord Jesus Christ with pure hearts, and honor him by blameless lives.

The principal, direct agency of the Review will, nevertheless, be employed to benefit the Baptists themselves. The denomination has extended itself, with great rapidity, over all parts of our country; and it is multiplying by thousands every year. It enjoys, among the great mass of the denomination, a happy union of opinion and feeling, and there are but few obstacles to its prosperity. There is, however, much room for improvement, not in the creed and structure of our churches, but in their opinions and policy on many important points. The denomination might be stronger than it is, if a few evils were remedied; and it might more effectually fulfil the duty which belongs to it, as extending its influence over more minds, in our country, than any other denomination. This position is one of great responsibility; and while so much is to be done, for the moral benefit of our own land, and for the regeneration of the world, the Baptists ought to be prepared to perform their part in the great enterprise. It will be the object of the Review, then, to spread among the denomination correct opinions; to soften and gradually remove all prejudices; to diffuse a spirit of concord and produce a more effective union; to inspire among all Baptists a desire for improvement, a thirst for knowledge, a zeal for truth, an enlarged charity, an irrepressible spirit of holy enterprise. Education, not of the ministry merely, but of all classes, will be a prominent theme in the Review. We shall, in short, feel it to be a duty to discuss all proper and useful topics, while we shall avoid those which would cause discord, rather than promote union and holiness among our brethren, in every portion of the country. We must, however, reserve the right to judge what these topics are; and we can give no pledges, except the general assurance of a conscientious endeavor to please our Lord, and advance the prosperity of his cause.

We hope to benefit our denomination by nourishing a love of reading. The press is now so active, and education so widely diffused, that it becomes the privilege and the duty of

all to read.—A denomination which does not read must fall in the rear. Knowledge will take the lead, and superior intellectual power is more effective than mere numerical strength. We propose to supply the Baptists with useful reading in our own work, but mainly by cultivating a taste for books, and by pointing out those which may be read with profit.—We shall be particularly attentive to Baptist literature; and we intend to give some account of every Baptist publication, in any part of the world, which may fall within our reach, and may be worthy of notice.

We cherish the hope, too, of contributing to the formation of a Baptist literature, by examining the books which we already have or which may be published; by suggesting themes for new books; and by cultivating the power of writing among our literary men. We must, of necessity, enlist many pens in writing for the Review. Our writers will thus learn their own strength, and will become acquainted with each other. He who can write a good article may be incited to write a valuable book. The genius which shall timidly try its wings, in a short flight, may gain courage and vigor to mount aloft.

We have, perhaps, said enough respecting our plans.—How far we shall be enabled to accomplish them, must depend on the blessing of God, and the favor of the public.

In connection with these remarks, we wish to make a few suggestions to correspondents.

1. We repeat, that the success of the Review will depend, in a great degree, on the prompt and steady support of literary men, in all parts of our land. We wish each one to feel a personal responsibility, and to furnish us with articles on proper subjects, without waiting for a personal application.

2. All articles ought to be sent to the editor or the publishers, *two months*, at least, before the day on which the number for which they are designed shall be issued.

3. The editor must, of course, exercise the right of rejecting an article, or of expunging portions of it, as he may judge to be proper.—He will feel it to be a duty to exclude every

thing, which, in his opinion, would do harm; but he will not feel himself obliged, nor at liberty, to reject every thing which may not coincide with his own individual views. He will not hold himself personally responsible, except for the articles which he may himself write, and which he will indicate by the signature *Editor*.—He requests correspondents to select some signature, either their own initials, or whatever else they may choose.—He is, on the whole, of opinion, that the practice of prefixing the writer's name to each article, produces more evil than good. He will not himself do it; but if a correspondent shall choose to prefix his name, he will be at liberty to do so.

4. Correspondents are requested to write *very legibly*, to affix the numbers to the pages, and to leave every other page blank, both for the reason mentioned by Quintilian*—to leave room for additions and corrections,—and for a reason of which he did not dream,—the greater convenience of the printers. It may often be desirable, for correspondents to make an estimate of the number of pages which their manuscript will fill.—This may easily be done by counting the average number of words in a line, and multiplying them by the average number of lines in a page. By the same process, the number of words in a printed page of the Review may be ascertained, and the comparison easily made.

* “Relinquendæ vacuæ tabellæ, in quibus libera adjicienti sit excursio.” i. e. “Blank spaces should be left, in which there may be free additions.”—*Quinc. lib. x. § 3*. We add this note, to request, that, if there shall be quotations in other languages, they may be written with great distinctness, and a translation always annexed.